

The Border Mail

TOP DROP  with David Sutherland

Duck into Three Ponds

WHAT do we think about when we start talking Hunter Valley?

If your name is Bruce Tyrrell then you think the valley is God's own country and anything grown south of the border isn't worth drinking!

And then there are many who think of the valley as commercial and probably the last place on the continent where vines should have been planted. The Gold Coast of the wine industry perhaps?

That's a little unfair and not entirely accurate but it is true to say that the Hunter is not the easiest place on the planet to grow grapes. Humidity and rain can often play havoc with the local industry at times but they still make some pretty reasonable booze, if they use the appropriate

grapes and the gods smile at the right times.

One smaller and lesser known producer in the Hunter is Mount Eyre Vineyards which has vineyards at Broke and Pokolbin providing a range of varieties.

It is interesting, in my opinion, that the white wines are the forte of those I have tasted, that being the Three Ponds range which retails between \$20 and \$25.

There are of course a number of different prestigious wines available from this producer but the Three Ponds provides good value for money.

As detailed in last week's column, the 2011 semillon is excellent with the typically austere structure but lovely subtle fruit and the two whites featured this week are great value.

The 2009 shiraz (\$24.95) is fresh, fruity and well made and the merlot 2010 is relatively simple and fresh but doesn't rely on sweetness for its commercial appeal — it's actually dry, spicy and food-friendly.

The Tsironis and Iannuzzi families are continuing a tradition originating in their native homelands of Greece and Italy right here in Australia.



mt eyre three ponds verdelho, 2011, \$19.95

Verdelho hails from Portugal with probably its greatest expression through the wines of Madeira. 2011 was an excellent vintage and this wine is beautifully made. No oak and relying on pristine fruit, it's delightfully aromatic with white peach and subtle tropical characters. The palate is nicely balanced with a touch more acid freshness than some verdelhos I have come across. Versatile with salads, white meat and seafood.

in a word: enlightening

mt eyre three ponds chardonnay, 2010, \$22.95

This wine is rich and soft, with just enough acidity to make the whole thing work nicely. French oak fermentation and ageing combined with some malolactic action has given the wine quite a luxurious feel to it — it's upfront and in your face, and frankly rather a nice drink with its classy charry oak and rich tropical and peachy fruit flavours and aromas. Ideal with prawns, crayfish or mornay-style dishes.

in a word: lush

